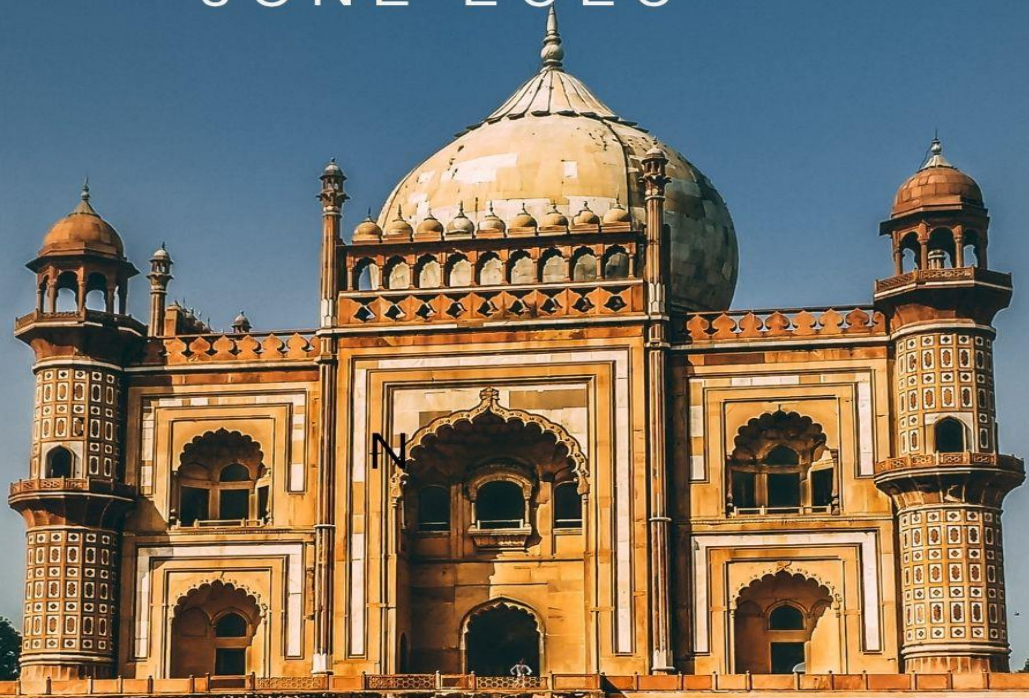


# MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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## OPERATION SHERUWALI

**Context :** Security forces pressed ahead with Operation Sheruwali in Jammu & Kashmir's Rajouri district, as the anti-terror operation entered its seventh day, focusing on suspected militants believed to be hiding in the Dorimal–Gambhir Mughlan forest belt.

### What is Operation Sheruwali?

Operation Sheruwali is a major multi-agency counter-terrorism mission underway in the dense forests of the Manjakote sector in Jammu & Kashmir's Rajouri district. The operation aims to neutralize suspected terrorists hiding in the region and dismantle their support and logistics networks.



**Launched by:** A joint effort of the **Indian Army, Jammu & Kashmir Police (Special Operations Group)**, and the **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)**.

### Objectives

- Track, isolate, and eliminate terrorists operating in the Rajouri–Poonch forest belt.
- Prevent infiltration, disrupt militant networks, and strengthen security in the strategically important Pir Panjal region.

### Key Features

- **Multi-Agency Coordination:** Brings together the Indian Army, J&K Police, CRPF, Intelligence Bureau, and other security agencies for coordinated operations.
- **Technology-Enabled Surveillance:** Employs drones, helicopters, thermal imaging devices, and sniffer dogs for real-time surveillance and target detection.
- **Cordon-and-Search Strategy:** Security forces have established multiple layers of cordons and sealed likely escape routes across the dense forest terrain.
- **Targeting Terror Infrastructure:** Focuses on dismantling militant hideouts, supply caches, and logistical support systems in remote forest areas.

## Significance

- Reflects India's capability to sustain intelligence-driven counter-terrorism operations in challenging mountainous and forested terrain.
- Aims to curb the resurgence of terrorist activity in the Rajouri–Poonch region, a strategically significant area close to the **Line of Control (LoC)**.
- Strengthens the overall security architecture and anti-infiltration grid in the Pir Panjal region.

## THE NORTHWEST INDIAN DUST STORMS

Context : A massive dust storm that swept across Churu and several other districts of Rajasthan on May 30, 2026, underscored the progressive degradation of the Aravalli range.

### Northwest Indian Dust Storms

#### What Are They?

Dust storms, locally known as *Andhi*, are meteorological events commonly observed in arid and semi-arid regions. They occur when strong, turbulent winds lift large volumes of loose sand and dust from dry, exposed surfaces into the atmosphere, creating massive dust clouds that severely reduce visibility and deteriorate air quality.



#### Impacted Regions

The primary impact zone encompasses northwest India, including Rajasthan (Churu, Hanumangarh, Bikaner, and Jodhpur), Delhi-NCR, Haryana, Punjab, and western Uttar Pradesh.

With the progressive degradation of the Aravalli range, these dust storms are now penetrating deeper into the densely populated Indo-Gangetic Plains.

### How Do They Form?

The development of pre-monsoon dust storms is governed by a combination of thermal and atmospheric processes:

- **Extreme Surface Heating:** During the pre-monsoon season (April–June), intense solar radiation heats the Thar Desert, generating localized zones of extreme temperature and strong convective instability.
- **Formation of Low-Pressure Systems:** The intense heating creates a surface low-pressure area that draws in strong southwesterly and westerly winds carrying dust from the Thar Desert and, at times, the Middle East.
- **Mechanical Dust Lifting:** When wind speeds exceed approximately 35–40 km/h over dry, sparsely vegetated terrain, sand and dust particles are lifted into the atmosphere. The degradation of the Aravalli range has weakened its role as a natural barrier, allowing dust-laden winds to travel much farther east.

### Key Features

- **Seasonal Occurrence:** Dust storms are largely confined to the pre-monsoon period, with peak intensity during May and June.
- **Role of the Aravallis:** Historically, the western slopes of the Aravalli range intercepted dust-laden winds, causing sediments to accumulate as obstacle sand dunes stabilized by native desert vegetation.
- **High Frequency in Delhi:** According to long-term climatological records of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Delhi experiences an average of about **2.5 dust-storm days in June**, the highest frequency recorded among Indian cities.
- **Anthropogenic Factors:** Human-induced degradation has increased the mobility of dust storms. A study by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) identified **12 expanding operational gaps** across the Aravalli range caused by the disappearance of **31 hillocks** due to illegal mining, significantly reducing the range's capacity to block dust-bearing winds.

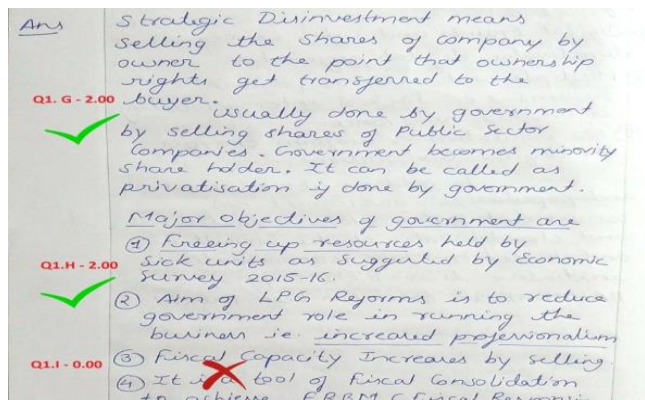
## ON-SCREEN MARKING (OSM) SYSTEM

Context : Following the declaration of the Class 12 board examination results, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has come under intense public scrutiny over significant discrepancies reported in its newly introduced On-Screen Marking (OSM) system.

## On-Screen Marking (OSM) System

### What Is It?

The On-Screen Marking (OSM) system is a digital evaluation framework for handwritten examination answer scripts. Instead of transporting physical answer booklets for manual assessment, the scripts are collected at examination centres, scanned, anonymized, and uploaded to a secure digital platform, where evaluators assess them electronically on computer screens.



### Developed and Managed By

The digital evaluation infrastructure, including the **OnMark** portal used by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), has been developed and managed by **Coempt Eduteck Pvt. Ltd.**

### History

- The CBSE first piloted an early version of the OSM system during **2013–14**, but the initiative was discontinued due to inadequate digital infrastructure and limited digital literacy among evaluators.
- Although the CBSE's governing body recommended in **June 2025** that OSM be introduced only for low-volume subjects on a trial basis, the Board implemented the system nationwide across all subjects in **2026**, bypassing the recommended pilot phase.

### Objectives

The CBSE introduced the OSM system to modernize the examination evaluation process with the following objectives:

- Eliminate manual errors in mark totaling and tabulation.
- Reduce the evaluation timeline from **12 days to 9 days**.
- Improve transparency and minimize post-result verification and re-evaluation requests.

### Working Mechanism and Key Features

- **Anonymization:** Student identities, including roll numbers and barcode details, are digitally masked before evaluation to eliminate examiner bias.

- **Digital Evaluation:** Examiners access scanned answer scripts through a secure, monitored portal, where they assign marks using digital annotation tools for step-wise assessment.
- **Automated Tabulation:** The software automatically compiles question-wise marks into the final score, minimizing the possibility of arithmetic errors.
- **Service-Level Security:** The system operates under a stringent Service Level Agreement (SLA), with contractual penalties of **₹1 lakh for every 15 minutes** of software downtime or significant page-loading delays.

## BLUE MICROMOON

Context: A rare astronomical event known as the **Blue Micromoon** was observed in the night sky.

According to NASA, this full moon was the **farthest, smallest, and dimmest** of the year. The event represented a rare combination of a **Blue Moon** and a **Micromoon**, a phenomenon that is not expected to occur again until **2053**.

### What Is Blue Micromoon?

A **Blue Micromoon** is a rare celestial event that occurs when two separate lunar phenomena coincide: a **Blue Moon**—the second full moon appearing within a single calendar month—and a **Micromoon**—a full moon that occurs near the Moon's apogee, the point where it is farthest from Earth in its orbit.



### How Does It Form?

The formation of a Blue Micromoon depends on both orbital dynamics and calendar alignment:

- **Micromoon Formation:** The Moon follows an elliptical orbit around Earth and completes one orbit approximately every **27.3 days**. The farthest point of this orbit,

known as **apogee**, lies about **403,945 km** from Earth. When the full moon phase occurs close to this point, the Moon appears smaller and less bright because of its increased distance from Earth.

- **Blue Moon Formation:** A complete lunar cycle, from one new moon to the next, lasts about **29.5 days**. Since calendar months generally have **30 or 31 days**, a full moon occurring at the beginning of a month can occasionally be followed by another full moon later in the same month, creating a Blue Moon.

## Blue Micromoon vs. Standard Blue Moon

| Feature                  | Standard Blue Moon                                            | Blue Micromoon                                                                      |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Definition</b>        | A calendar-based event involving two full moons in one month. | A Blue Moon that coincides with the Moon being near its farthest orbital point.     |
| <b>Orbital Position</b>  | Can occur at any point along the Moon's elliptical orbit.     | Must occur near apogee, the farthest point from Earth.                              |
| <b>Visual Appearance</b> | Appears similar in size to a typical full moon.               | Appears smaller than a normal full moon and significantly smaller than a Supermoon. |
| <b>Brightness</b>        | Normal lunar brightness.                                      | Appears dimmer due to its greater distance from Earth.                              |
| <b>Frequency</b>         | Occurs roughly once every 2–3 years.                          | A rare alignment that may take several decades to repeat.                           |

## Key Features

- **Reduced Brightness:** Since the Moon is farther away during apogee, it reflects less light toward Earth, making it appear as one of the dimmest full moons of the year.
- **Smaller Apparent Size:** The Moon's angular diameter decreases at greater distances, making a Micromoon appear approximately **7% smaller than an average full moon**.
- **The "Blue" Name Does Not Indicate Color:** Despite its name, a Blue Micromoon does not appear blue. It generally retains its usual pale gray appearance, although rare atmospheric conditions, such as volcanic ash or dust particles, can sometimes alter the Moon's color.

## THE BHAVYA PORTAL

**Context:** The Union Minister for Commerce and Industry inaugurated the **BHAVYA Portal** in New Delhi, marking the official rollout of the ₹33,660-crore

**Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana (BHAVYA)**, approved by the Union Cabinet. The initiative seeks to develop **100 world-class, investment-ready industrial parks** across the country to strengthen India's industrial ecosystem and attract greater investment.

### About the BHAVYA Portal

#### What is the BHAVYA Portal?

The **BHAVYA Portal** is a digital, single-window platform created by the **National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC)** to manage the entire lifecycle of industrial parks under the **Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana (BHAVYA)**.

It provides a common digital interface for States and Union Territories to submit project proposals, facilitates appraisal and selection, and enables **real-time monitoring of project implementation**. Thus, it seeks to bring greater transparency, coordination and efficiency to industrial-park development.



#### Basic Facts

- **Full Form:** Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana (BHAVYA)
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Commerce & Industry
- **Implementing/Nodal Agency:** National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC), under DPIIT
- **Nature:** Central Sector Scheme
- **Total Outlay:** ₹33,660 crore
- **Target:** Development of **100 world-class, investment-ready industrial parks**
- **Implementation Period:** 2026–27 to 2031–32 (six years)
- **Portal launched:** 8 June 2026 by Union Minister for Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal, in New Delhi.

## Objectives of BHAVYA

The scheme seeks to address India's infrastructure and competitiveness constraints by creating **plug-and-play industrial ecosystems** rather than merely providing industrial land.

### Major objectives

- Provide **investment-ready industrial plots** with essential infrastructure already in place.
- Reduce the time and cost involved in establishing manufacturing units.
- Improve India's attractiveness as a global manufacturing and investment destination.
- Promote **manufacturing-led economic growth and large-scale employment**.
- Strengthen supply chains and multimodal logistics connectivity.
- Promote balanced industrialisation, including greater opportunities for **Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities and industrially backward regions**.
- Support the broader goals of **Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat 2047**.

### Key Features of the Scheme

#### 1. Challenge-based competitive selection

States and Union Territories will compete for selection by submitting **Detailed Project Reports (DPRs)**.

Proposals will be assessed on factors such as:

- availability and suitability of land;
- existing industrial strengths;
- investor interest;
- sectoral potential;
- regional requirements and development potential.

This shifts the approach from automatic allocation of funds towards **competitive, performance-oriented industrial development**.

#### 2. Development of 100 industrial parks

BHAVYA envisages the development of **100 industrial parks over six years**.

In the initial phase, up to **50 parks** are to be selected through the challenge-based competitive process. The first 20 parks are to be considered from applications received between 1 June and 31 July 2026, followed by another 30 based on applications received up to 30 September 2026.

#### 3. Flexible park sizes

The size of industrial parks will vary according to geography, urban proximity and regional requirements:

- **25 acres:** Hilly regions, Northeastern States, smaller Union Territories and similar regions.
- **100–500 acres:** Medium-sized States and regions.
- **Up to 1,000 acres:** Locations near major cities and towns.

This flexible model recognises India's considerable geographical and regional diversity.

#### **4. Greenfield and brownfield development**

An important feature of the operational guidelines is that BHAVYA permits development of both **greenfield industrial parks and eligible brownfield parks**.

This allows the scheme not only to create new industrial ecosystems but also to upgrade suitable existing industrial areas.

#### **5. 51:49 partnership model**

The **State Government provides the land**, while infrastructure development is supported by the Government of India through NICDC.

NICDC will partner with States under a **51:49 model**, creating a collaborative institutional framework for park development.

#### **6. Plug-and-play infrastructure**

The parks are intended to provide essential facilities such as:

- assured water and power supply;
- roads and other internal infrastructure;
- multimodal connectivity;
- logistics facilities;
- digital governance systems;
- single-window clearances;
- ready land titles;
- worker-support infrastructure;
- sustainable and smart infrastructure.

Where feasible, **air connectivity** may also be facilitated.

## 7. Focus on innovation and high-tech industries

Dedicated spaces will be created for:

- Start-ups;
- Deep-tech enterprises;
- R&D institutions;
- Innovation-driven businesses;
- Global Capability Centres (GCCs).

This is significant for moving Indian manufacturing towards **higher-value and technology-intensive production**.

## 8. In-park testing infrastructure

Modern testing facilities are proposed within the industrial parks in collaboration with institutions such as:

- **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)**
- **Export Inspection Agency (EIA)**
- **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)**

Such facilities can reduce compliance delays and help firms meet domestic and international quality standards.

## 9. Worker-support and social infrastructure

BHAVYA follows an integrated industrial-development approach by incorporating **worker-support facilities and social infrastructure**, rather than treating industrial parks merely as manufacturing zones.

This can help improve labour productivity, worker welfare and the overall liveability of industrial regions.

## 10. Digital monitoring

The BHAVYA Portal enables:

**DPR submission → appraisal/evaluation → project approval → implementation → real-time monitoring**

This creates an end-to-end digital governance mechanism and can improve accountability and project execution.

## Why is BHAVYA Important for India?

### 1. Manufacturing push

India has sought to increase the contribution and competitiveness of manufacturing. World-class industrial infrastructure can help overcome bottlenecks relating to land, utilities, logistics and approvals.

### 2. Lower logistics and transaction costs

Integrated industrial parks with multimodal connectivity can improve movement of raw materials and finished goods and strengthen domestic and global supply chains.

### 3. Employment generation

Large industrial ecosystems can create **direct employment in manufacturing** as well as indirect employment in logistics, services, construction and ancillary industries.

### 4. Regional development

Prioritising suitable locations beyond major metropolitan centres can promote more geographically balanced industrialisation and strengthen **Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities**.

### 5. Investment attraction

By providing ready infrastructure and streamlined approvals, BHAVYA can reduce the initial risks and time involved in setting up manufacturing facilities, thereby improving India's investment proposition.

### 6. Cluster-based industrialisation

Concentrating related industries in integrated parks can generate **economies of scale, agglomeration benefits, shared infrastructure and stronger supplier networks**.

### 7. Link with national initiatives

BHAVYA complements broader initiatives such as:

- **Make in India**
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat**
- **PM Gati Shakti**
- **National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP)**
- **Viksit Bharat 2047**

## Challenges / Critical Analysis

- **Land availability:** States must provide suitable and contiguous land with clear titles.
- **Centre–State coordination:** Successful implementation requires sustained cooperation between different levels of government.
- **Execution capacity:** Delays in infrastructure creation can undermine the plug-and-play model.
- **Environmental concerns:** Industrial expansion must be balanced with ecological sustainability and resource efficiency.
- **Uneven regional participation:** Better-performing States may have an advantage in competitive selection, potentially widening regional disparities.
- **Last-mile connectivity:** Industrial parks must be effectively connected to ports, railways, highways and markets.
- **Demand-side risk:** Infrastructure alone will not guarantee investment; parks must be supported by a strong business ecosystem and actual investor demand.

## Way Forward

- Ensure transparent and competitive selection through the BHAVYA Portal.
- Integrate park planning with **PM Gati Shakti** and national logistics networks.
- Promote green industrial parks using renewable energy, circular-economy principles and efficient water management.
- Strengthen MSME linkages and local supplier ecosystems around large industrial units.
- Provide skilling and worker-support infrastructure alongside industrial development.
- Monitor outcomes not merely in terms of parks constructed but also **investment mobilised, jobs created, capacity utilisation and exports generated**.

## THE LPMS - VINIMAY SYSTEM

**Context:** The Union Home Minister inaugurated ‘Vinimay’, an advanced **Land Port Management System (LPMS)** platform, at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi, marking a step towards the digital transformation and streamlined management of India’s land ports.

### About the Land Port Management System (LPMS) – ‘VINIMAY’

#### What is VINIMAY?

**VINIMAY** is a digital, integrated and real-time **Land Port Management System (LPMS)** developed by the **Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.

It functions as a **Single Electronic Window** for managing cargo, vehicles and passenger movement at India's international land ports. The system seeks to bring land ports at par with airports and seaports in terms of digital processing, automation, information exchange and regulatory coordination.

### Basic Facts

- **Name:** Land Port Management System (LPMS) – 'VINIMAY'
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs
- **Developed by:** Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)
- **Nature:** Digital platform for integrated management of land ports/Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)
- **Launched:** 9 June 2026 in New Delhi
- **Core idea:** **Single-window, paperless, real-time and interoperable border management**
- **Current status:** As of July 2026, VINIMAY has been operationalised at **10 Integrated Check Posts**. LPAI currently operates **15 land ports**, with 11 more planned over the next 2–3 years.



### Objectives of VINIMAY

The system aims to transform India's land ports from traditionally fragmented border-processing points into **integrated, technology-enabled gateways for trade, security and people-to-people connectivity**.

### Major objectives

- Facilitate **faster and more efficient cross-border trade**.
- Reduce paperwork, manual intervention and transaction costs.
- Improve coordination among multiple border agencies.
- Strengthen surveillance and **border security**.
- Enable real-time tracking of cargo, vehicles and passengers.
- Improve transparency and accountability in land-port operations.
- Reduce congestion and waiting time at Integrated Check Posts.
- Support legitimate trade while helping curb **smuggling, illegal crossings and other trans-border activities**.

- Promote economic development of border regions.
- Contribute to the government's vision of **Smart Borders and Viksit Bharat 2047**.

### Key Features of VINIMAY

#### **1. Single Electronic Window**

VINIMAY brings different stakeholders and regulatory processes onto a common digital platform.

It provides **end-to-end digital workflows** covering:

- Slot booking
- Cargo processing
- Vehicle processing
- Passenger movement
- Payments
- Tracking
- Single-window clearances

This reduces duplication and dependence on physical documentation.

#### **2. Paperless and Faster Processing**

The system is expected to eliminate nearly **90% of paperwork**.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, truck waiting time is expected to decline by around **40–60%**, while gate processing time could fall by **22–35%**.

#### **3. Inter-Agency Data Integration**

VINIMAY enables real-time exchange of information among multiple agencies and platforms, including:

- **ICEGATE** – customs-related processes
- **CBIC** – indirect tax and customs administration
- **BSF** – border security
- **DGFT** – foreign trade-related information
- **UIDAI** – identity verification
- **ULIP** – logistics data and supply-chain visibility
- **Motor Vehicle System** – vehicle-related information

The integration of these systems creates a common information environment for border agencies.

An important recent development is its integration with **ULIP, ICEGATE, MoRTH and GST systems**.

#### **4. Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)**

VINIMAY incorporates **Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)** technology at entry and exit gates.

It can automatically identify vehicles and link them with pre-booked slots, thereby reducing manual verification and accelerating gate movement.

##### **Significance:**

ANPR + digital slot management → **less human intervention + faster processing + improved security**.

#### **5. Real-Time Cargo and Vehicle Tracking**

The system enables digital tracking of cargo and vehicles across different stages of their movement through the land port.

Integration with customs and logistics platforms can improve visibility of the supply chain and facilitate faster clearance.

The earlier ICEGATE–LPMS integration at Agartala, for example, enabled real-time exchange of customs information and event-based tracking from **slot booking to gate-in and gate-out**.

#### **6. Coordinated Border Management**

VINIMAY is an example of **Coordinated Border Management (CBM)**, where different agencies share information and coordinate their functions rather than operating through isolated systems.

This can lead to:

**Shared data → coordinated risk assessment → synchronised decisions → faster clearance + stronger security**

The ICEGATE–LPMS integration has explicitly been described as supporting coordinated border management through shared data and harmonised decision-making.

## VINIMAY and Smart Borders

One of the most important conceptual linkages for UPSC is **Smart Border Management**.

Traditional border management often involves:

**Physical infrastructure + manual verification + multiple agencies + paperwork**

VINIMAY moves towards:

**Digital infrastructure + real-time data + automation + inter-agency coordination + risk-based management**

The government envisages integrating LPMS with the broader **Smart Border** framework to strengthen both **economic security and physical border security**.

Thus, VINIMAY represents a shift from a purely **security-centric border approach** towards an integrated model combining:

**Security + Trade Facilitation + Connectivity + Development**

## Importance of Land Ports

Land ports are strategically important because India shares extensive land borders with multiple countries.

They serve three interconnected functions:

### **1. Security Gateway**

They act as important points for monitoring and regulating cross-border movement.

### **2. Economic Gateway**

They facilitate legitimate movement of goods and contribute to regional and international trade.

### **3. Social and Cultural Gateway**

They facilitate movement of people and strengthen **people-to-people and cultural ties** with neighbouring countries.

The government has also highlighted the role of land ports in strengthening local economies and reducing migration from border districts.

## Economic Significance

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, trade through India's land ports increased from around **₹5,000 crore in 2014 to ₹83,000 crore in 2026**.

VINIMAY can further support this growth by:

- Reducing border congestion.
- Lowering transaction costs.
- Improving customs coordination.
- Reducing cargo dwell time.
- Increasing supply-chain visibility.
- Facilitating MSME participation in cross-border trade.
- Improving connectivity with neighbouring countries.

## Regional Connectivity and Neighbourhood Policy

VINIMAY has significance beyond domestic logistics.

Efficient land ports can strengthen India's connectivity with:

- **Nepal**
- **Bhutan**
- **Bangladesh**
- **Myanmar**
- **Pakistan**

Therefore, modernising land ports can support India's **Neighbourhood First policy**, cross-border trade and regional economic integration.

It is particularly relevant for the **Northeastern Region**, where land connectivity with Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar can provide alternative routes to markets and strengthen regional economic integration.

## Border Area Development

Modern land ports can act as **growth centres in border regions**.

Their development can generate:

- Local employment
- Warehousing and logistics services
- Transport-sector opportunities

- Ancillary industries
- Better roads and connectivity
- Greater access to markets

This is important because economic development of border areas can complement physical border security by creating **local economic opportunities and reducing outward migration**.

### Current Network

The LPAI currently operates **15 land ports** across India's international borders.

They include land ports along the borders with:

- Pakistan
- Nepal
- Bhutan
- Bangladesh
- Myanmar

The government plans to develop **11 additional land ports over the next 2–3 years**.

As of **July 2026**, VINIMAY had been operationalised at **10 Integrated Check Posts**, including Agartala, Srimantapur, Darranga, Rupaidiha, Raxaul, Petrapole, Jogbani, Dawki, Sutarkandi and Attari.

### Significance for India

#### **1. Trade Facilitation**

Faster border clearance can improve India's competitiveness in international and regional trade.

#### **2. Logistics Efficiency**

Digitisation can reduce waiting time, paperwork and transaction costs, contributing to lower logistics costs.

#### **3. National Security**

Integrated data and automated systems can improve identification, monitoring and detection of suspicious movements.

#### 4. Curbing Illegal Activities

Better information sharing and digital tracking can strengthen efforts against smuggling, illegal migration and other trans-border crimes.

#### 5. Cooperative Federalism

Effective land-port management requires coordination between the Centre, States and multiple regulatory/security agencies.

#### 6. Digital Governance

VINIMAY is an example of **whole-of-government digital governance**, where different databases and agencies are connected through a common platform.

#### 7. Regional Integration

Efficient land ports can deepen India's economic and social engagement with neighbouring countries.

### Challenges

- **Cybersecurity risks:** Greater digital integration increases exposure to cyberattacks and data breaches.
- **Inter-agency coordination:** Different agencies may have varying technological capacities and operational procedures.
- **Digital infrastructure gaps:** Remote border areas may face connectivity and power constraints.
- **Human capacity:** Personnel need continuous training to operate advanced digital systems.
- **Data privacy:** Integration of identity, vehicle and trade information requires strong safeguards.
- **Cross-border interoperability:** Indian systems may need coordination with corresponding systems of neighbouring countries.
- **Physical infrastructure constraints:** Digital platforms cannot substitute for inadequate roads, warehouses, parking areas or cargo-handling facilities.
- **Smuggling and illegal networks:** Technology must be complemented by intelligence-led policing and physical surveillance.

### Way Forward

- Integrate VINIMAY further with the **Smart Border** architecture.
- Strengthen cybersecurity and data-protection mechanisms.
- Expand digital infrastructure in remote border regions.

- Promote interoperability with neighbouring countries.
- Use **AI and risk-based analytics** for identifying high-risk consignments and movements.
- Combine digital systems with modern physical infrastructure.
- Develop land ports as **multimodal logistics and economic hubs**.
- Regularly measure outcomes through indicators such as **dwelt time, cargo throughput, clearance time and transaction costs**.

## FCRA BILL — EXPANDING STATE CONTROL OVER CIVIL SOCIETY

Context: The introduction of the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026** in the Lok Sabha has triggered significant **constitutional, legal and political debate**, particularly over the proposed changes to the regulation of foreign-funded organisations and the extent of executive powers over their assets.

### About the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026

#### What is it?

The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026** seeks to amend the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA)**, which regulates the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contributions by individuals, associations and organisations in India.

The Bill was introduced in the **Lok Sabha on 25 March 2026** and is currently under parliamentary consideration. The government describes the proposed changes as measures to address implementation gaps, strengthen accountability and safeguard foreign-funded assets, while critics have raised concerns regarding the concentration of regulatory powers and their possible impact on civil society.



## Background of FCRA

### 1. FCRA, 1976

The original FCRA was enacted during the **Emergency** to regulate foreign contributions and prevent their use in ways considered detrimental to national sovereignty and public interest.

### 2. FCRA, 2010

The **FCRA, 2010** replaced the 1976 law and established a more comprehensive regulatory framework covering:

- Registration and renewal of NGOs receiving foreign funds.
- Prior permission for receiving foreign contributions.
- Utilisation and accounting of foreign funds.
- Audit and reporting requirements.
- Suspension and cancellation of registration.
- Regulation of foreign-funded assets.

Importantly, the concept of vesting of assets created from foreign contribution upon cancellation was already present in **Section 15 of the 2010 Act**. The 2026 Bill seeks to provide a more detailed statutory framework for their custody, supervision, management and eventual disposal.

### 3. FCRA Amendment, 2020

The 2020 amendments significantly tightened regulation by, among other measures:

- Reducing the ceiling for administrative expenditure from **50% to 20%**.
- Restricting transfer of foreign contributions to other associations.
- Requiring identification documents such as Aadhaar/passport details for specified office-bearers.
- Mandating a designated FCRA account with the **State Bank of India, New Delhi Main Branch**.

## Key Provisions of the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026

### 1. Cessation of FCRA Registration

The Bill proposes a new **Section 14B** under which registration would cease upon:

- Expiry of the certificate;

- Non-renewal;
- Refusal of renewal.

This aims to remove ambiguity regarding the legal status of organisations whose registration has expired or has not been renewed.

## 2. Creation of a Designated Authority

The Bill proposes a **Designated Authority** to handle foreign contributions and assets following cessation, cancellation or surrender of FCRA registration.

Its responsibilities would include:

- Taking custody of covered assets;
- Preserving and managing them;
- Supervising their utilisation;
- Returning them where registration is restored;
- Facilitating their eventual transfer or disposal where permanent vesting occurs.

## 3. Provisional Vesting of Assets

When an organisation's registration ends, assets created from foreign contributions would initially **vest provisionally** in the Designated Authority.

This does **not mean that all assets of an NGO are automatically taken over**. The proposed framework concerns assets attributable to foreign contributions and applies after the organisation's registration has lawfully ceased.

## 4. Restoration of Assets

If the organisation successfully obtains restoration of its registration within the prescribed period:

**Foreign-funded assets + unused foreign contribution → returned to the organisation**

This provides a mechanism to reverse provisional vesting.

## 5. Permanent Vesting

If registration is not restored within the prescribed period, the assets may become **permanently vested**.

They may then be:

- Transferred to government departments or agencies for **public purposes**, or
- Disposed of where direct utilisation is not feasible.

Where assets are sold, the proceeds are proposed to be credited to the **Consolidated Fund of India**.

### **Important safeguard**

The government has clarified that officials do not personally benefit from such assets and that places of worship retain their religious character under the proposed framework.

### **6. Judicial Remedy**

The Bill provides for a mechanism of **revision and judicial appeal** against orders of the Designated Authority.

An aggrieved person can challenge the order before the **District Judge within the prescribed period**, strengthening the availability of judicial oversight.

### **7. Regulation of Assets During Suspension**

The Bill also seeks to regulate how assets may be dealt with while an organisation's FCRA registration remains **suspended**.

This addresses an existing regulatory gap concerning the management and protection of foreign-funded assets during suspension.

### **8. Central Approval for FCRA Investigations**

The Bill proposes that **State Governments and their agencies obtain prior approval from the Central Government before initiating investigations under the FCRA**.

### **Government's rationale**

Since FCRA is a central law dealing with issues connected to foreign contributions, national security and foreign relations, the government argues that central approval can prevent:

- Parallel investigations;
- Conflicting proceedings;
- Inconsistent enforcement.

## 9. Rationalisation of Criminal Penalties

The Bill proposes to reduce the **maximum imprisonment for certain FCRA violations from five years to one year**, while retaining financial penalties.

This represents an element of **decriminalisation/rationalisation of penalties** alongside stronger administrative oversight.

## 10. Timelines for Prior Permission

The Bill also proposes provisions concerning timelines for the **receipt and utilisation of foreign contributions received under prior permission**.

The objective is to provide greater procedural clarity and prevent prolonged uncertainty regarding utilisation of approved foreign funds.

## FCRA Amendment Rules, 2026 – Important Distinction

The **FCRA Amendment Rules, 2026 were notified on 22 June 2026 and are already in force**, whereas the Amendment Bill remains under parliamentary consideration.

### Major changes under the Rules

#### 1. Activity- and State-specific registration

FCRA registration certificates will specify:

- The approved purpose/activity; and
- The State/Union Territory in which the organisation may operate.

This seeks to make permissions more precise and easier to monitor.

#### 2. Specified religious activities

The revised Rules explicitly identify permissible religious purposes, providing greater clarity for faith-based organisations.

#### 3. Minimum utilisation requirement

Organisations seeking renewal must demonstrate utilisation of at least **₹10 lakh in foreign contributions during the preceding two years**.

#### 4. Enhanced disclosure

Annual returns will include greater detail regarding:

- Project-wise utilisation;
- Activity-wise expenditure;
- Website and social-media information;
- Ultimate foreign donor, including where funds pass through intermediaries.

#### Why is FCRA Regulation Necessary?

Foreign contributions can support valuable activities such as:

- Healthcare;
- Education;
- Disaster relief;
- Scientific research;
- Environmental conservation;
- Community development;
- Humanitarian assistance.

At the same time, unregulated foreign funding may raise concerns relating to:

- National security;
- Money laundering;
- Foreign influence;
- Political interference;
- Financial transparency;
- Diversion or misuse of funds.

Therefore, the core policy challenge is to balance:

**National security + financial transparency + regulatory accountability**

with

**Freedom of association + civil society space + legitimate philanthropic activity.**

The government itself recognises the developmental role of foreign contributions while emphasising transparency, sovereignty and democratic accountability.

## Major Concerns and Constitutional Dimensions

### 1. Freedom of Association – Article 19(1)(c)

NGOs and voluntary organisations contribute to civil society and associational life.

Excessive or disproportionate regulation may raise concerns regarding the **freedom of association**, although this right is subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(4).

### 2. Right to Property – Article 300A

Permanent vesting of assets raises questions regarding the **constitutional protection of property under Article 300A**.

Any deprivation of property must have authority of law and satisfy applicable constitutional standards.

### 3. Rule of Law and Due Process

A system involving cancellation, provisional vesting and eventual permanent vesting requires:

- Clear statutory standards;
- Notice;
- Reasoned orders;
- Timely hearings;
- Independent review;
- Effective judicial remedies.

### 4. Federalism

The requirement of prior Central approval before State agencies initiate FCRA investigations raises questions regarding the balance between:

**Central regulatory authority ↔ State administrative autonomy.**

The government's counterargument is that FCRA is a **central legislation**, and coordinated enforcement can prevent duplication and contradictory proceedings.

### 5. Civil Society and Democratic Participation

Civil society organisations often perform functions that complement the State in areas such as:

- Healthcare;
- Education;

- Humanitarian assistance;
- Tribal welfare;
- Environmental protection;
- Women's empowerment;
- Rights awareness.

Excessive regulatory uncertainty could potentially create a **chilling effect** on legitimate civil-society activity.

At the same time, transparency in foreign funding is essential to maintain public confidence and prevent covert foreign influence.

#### Government's Rationale vs Critics' Concerns

##### Government's Perspective

Protect national sovereignty

Prevent misuse of foreign funds

Secure foreign-funded assets

Improve accountability

Coordinate investigations

Prevent parallel proceedings

Clarify legal status after expiry

Ensure public use of permanently vested assets

##### Critics' Concern

Excessive executive control

Regulatory overreach

Potential property-rights concerns

Greater compliance burden

Centralisation of powers

Possible impact on federalism

Risk of disruption during renewal

Need for stronger independent oversight

#### Key Safeguards Needed

##### 1. Time-bound renewal mechanism

Fixed statutory timelines can reduce uncertainty and ensure that genuine organisations are not disrupted merely because of administrative delays.

## 2. Independent oversight of asset vesting

Provisional and permanent vesting should be subject to transparent procedures, reasoned orders and effective judicial review.

## 3. Clear definition of public interest

Regulatory decisions should rely on **objective and legally defined criteria** rather than vague or subjective standards.

## 4. Protection of legitimate domestic assets

The distinction between **foreign-funded assets and assets created from domestic resources** should remain clear to avoid disproportionate intervention.

## 5. Proportionate regulation

Minor procedural violations should preferably attract corrective measures rather than automatically threatening an organisation's existence.

## 6. Stakeholder consultation

Parliamentary scrutiny and consultation with:

- NGOs;
- Humanitarian organisations;
- Educational institutions;
- Faith-based organisations;
- Legal experts;
- State Governments

can improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of the regulatory framework.

## Way Forward

A balanced FCRA regime should adopt the principle of:

**“Regulate foreign money, not legitimate civil society.”**

The following measures can strengthen the framework:

- Introduce predictable and time-bound renewal procedures.
- Develop a transparent, risk-based compliance system.
- Strengthen digital monitoring while protecting sensitive personal data.

- Provide independent review of major coercive actions.
- Ensure proportionality between violation and penalty.
- Distinguish genuine regulatory violations from deliberate financial misconduct.
- Improve coordination between Centre and States.
- Promote transparency in foreign-donor and fund-utilisation reporting.
- Protect NGOs delivering essential public services during regulatory transitions.

## Conclusion

The **FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026** seeks to address long-standing procedural gaps in the management of foreign contributions and foreign-funded assets by introducing a structured framework for cessation, provisional and permanent vesting, investigation and judicial remedies. At the same time, its provisions raise important questions concerning **proportionality, civil-society autonomy, property rights, federalism and executive discretion**.

The way forward lies in achieving a careful equilibrium:

**National security + financial transparency + accountability + constitutional freedoms + vibrant civil society**

Such a balance can ensure that foreign contributions are regulated effectively without undermining the legitimate role of civil society in India's democratic and developmental process.

## THE BRICS INDORE DECLARATION

Context : India's **2026 BRICS Presidency** concluded with the adoption of the **BRICS Indore Declaration** at the meeting of BRICS Agriculture Ministers convened in Indore in June 2026.

### About the BRICS Indore Declaration

#### What is it?

The **BRICS Indore Declaration** is a joint framework adopted by the BRICS countries at the **Agriculture Ministers' Meeting held in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, in June 2026**.

The declaration provides a **farmer-centric roadmap** for enhancing cooperation among BRICS members on food security, sustainable agriculture, agricultural innovation, climate resilience and agricultural trade.



## Objectives

The declaration seeks to:

- Strengthen **food and nutritional security** across BRICS countries.
- Promote sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural practices.
- Improve the welfare, livelihoods and resilience of farmers.
- Encourage cooperation in **digital agriculture and emerging technologies**.
- Facilitate agricultural trade, knowledge exchange and technology transfer.
- Protect **farmers' rights and agricultural biodiversity**.

## Key Initiatives under the Declaration

### 1. BRICS Network of Centres of Excellence on Agro-Ecology and Regenerative Agriculture

- Establishes a collaborative platform for **research, capacity building, training and exchange of best practices** in agro-ecology and regenerative agriculture.
- Encourages natural, organic and resource-efficient farming methods.
- Supports climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable management of soil, water and other natural resources.
- Can facilitate the adaptation of locally appropriate farming practices across BRICS countries.

## 2. BRICS Network on Digital Agriculture

- Promotes collaboration in **Artificial Intelligence (AI), geospatial technologies, digital public infrastructure and data-driven agriculture.**
- Encourages sharing of technological solutions and best practices among member countries.
- Can improve farm-level decision-making through weather, soil, market and crop data.
- Seeks to accelerate **technology transfer and digital transformation of agriculture.**

## 3. Global Forum on Farmers' Rights in Seed Systems

- Emphasises the protection of **farmers' rights, indigenous seed varieties and traditional agricultural knowledge.**
- Supports conservation and sustainable use of agricultural genetic resources.
- Recognises the importance of seed diversity in enhancing resilience to climate change and emerging agricultural risks.
- Can contribute to both **agrobiodiversity conservation and long-term food security.**

## 4. BRICS AgriN

The **BRICS AgriN (Agro Inputs, Genetic Resources and Information Network)** seeks to strengthen cooperation in:

- Agricultural inputs;
- Genetic resources;
- Improved seed varieties;
- Agricultural information;
- Research and technical expertise.

It can facilitate **knowledge sharing, capacity building and collaborative agricultural research** among BRICS countries.

### Significance

#### 1. Strengthening Food Security

Collective action among major emerging economies can help address challenges related to **food availability, affordability, nutrition and agricultural productivity.**

#### 2. Climate-Resilient Agriculture

The focus on regenerative and agro-ecological approaches can help farmers respond to:

- Rising temperatures;

- Erratic rainfall;
- Droughts and floods;
- Soil degradation;
- Water stress;
- Loss of biodiversity.

### 3. Farmer-Centric Development

The declaration places **farmers and their livelihoods at the centre of agricultural cooperation**, rather than focusing solely on production and trade.

### 4. Digital Transformation of Agriculture

Cooperation in AI, geospatial technologies and digital public infrastructure can support:

**Precision farming → Better resource use → Higher productivity → Lower risks → Improved farmer incomes**

### 5. Protection of Agricultural Biodiversity

Greater attention to indigenous seeds, traditional knowledge and genetic resources can strengthen **agrobiodiversity** and reduce dependence on a narrow range of crop varieties.

### 6. Agricultural Trade and Cooperation

The declaration can facilitate greater exchange of agricultural products, technologies, knowledge and inputs among BRICS economies, contributing to **South-South cooperation**.

### 7. Strengthening India's Global Leadership

The initiatives reflect India's attempt to position itself as a **knowledge and technology partner for developing countries**, particularly in areas such as digital agriculture, sustainable farming and farmers' rights.

## **JHARKHAND'S FOUR TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS RECEIVE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION (GI) TAG**

Context : Jharkhand has achieved a significant recognition for its indigenous crafts, with **Bhagaiya silk, Kuchai silk, Munda jewellery, and bamboo craft** receiving the prestigious **Geographical Indication (GI) tag**, highlighting their distinctive regional identity and traditional heritage.



### About Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

A **Geographical Indication (GI)** is an intellectual property right granted to a product that originates from a particular geographical region and possesses **specific qualities, characteristics or reputation attributable to that place of origin**.

In India, GI registration and protection are governed by the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.

### Key Features and Significance of a GI Tag

#### **1. Protection of Regional Identity**

A GI protects the name and identity of products that are uniquely associated with a particular geographical area.

#### **2. Prevention of Misuse**

It helps prevent unauthorised use, imitation and misleading claims regarding the geographical origin of a product.

#### **3. Better Market Recognition**

GI certification enhances the authenticity and visibility of traditional products, potentially enabling producers to command better prices.

#### 4. Livelihood Generation

Greater market access can improve the incomes of **artisans, farmers, weavers and other local producers**, contributing to rural economic development.

#### 5. Preservation of Traditional Knowledge

GI protection helps safeguard **indigenous skills, traditional production techniques and cultural practices** from being lost or commercially misappropriated.

#### 6. Export and Tourism Potential

GI-tagged products can strengthen India's **regional branding, export potential and cultural tourism**, while promoting local entrepreneurship.

### Jharkhand's Four Newly GI-Recognised Products

#### 1. Bhagaiya Silk

- Bhagaiya silk is associated with the **Bhagaiya region of Jharkhand** and is part of the state's traditional silk and handloom heritage.
- It is associated with **Tussar silk production**, known for its distinctive texture and natural lustre.
- Traditional processing and weaving techniques reflect the indigenous knowledge of local silk producers.
- GI recognition can help improve the product's market identity and create better livelihood opportunities for artisans and weavers.

#### 2. Kuchai Silk

- **Kuchai silk** is associated with the Kuchai region of Jharkhand and is another important component of the state's Tussar silk tradition.
- It reflects traditional knowledge related to **silk rearing, processing, spinning and weaving**.
- The product is valued for its characteristic texture, natural appearance and handloom heritage.
- GI recognition can strengthen its branding and facilitate wider domestic and international markets.

### 3. Munda Jewellery

- **Munda jewellery** represents the traditional metalcraft and cultural heritage of the **Munda tribal community**.
- Artisans use traditional designs incorporating **geometric forms, nature-inspired motifs and indigenous aesthetic elements**.
- Jewellery carries significance beyond ornamentation, being linked with **tribal identity, customs, social traditions and cultural expression**.
- GI recognition can provide greater visibility to tribal artisans while helping preserve indigenous craftsmanship.

#### Significance

It demonstrates how **Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs)** can contribute to the preservation of **tribal cultural heritage and traditional knowledge**.

### 4. Jharkhand Bamboo Craft

- Jharkhand's bamboo craft tradition uses locally available bamboo to produce a variety of **utility, household and decorative articles**.
- Products include baskets, mats, containers and other handicraft items.
- The craft provides livelihood opportunities, particularly in rural and forest-dependent communities.
- Bamboo is a **renewable and versatile natural resource**, making bamboo-based enterprises relevant to sustainable livelihoods and the circular economy.
- GI recognition can improve the visibility and commercial value of these traditional products.

#### Broader Significance for Jharkhand

The GI recognition of these four products can contribute to:

**Traditional skills → Product recognition → Market access → Value addition → Artisan incomes → Cultural preservation**

It can also support:

- **Tribal entrepreneurship**
- Rural employment
- Women-led livelihoods
- Handloom and handicraft development

- Sustainable use of local resources
- Cultural tourism
- Preservation of indigenous knowledge
- Local-to-global branding

## DROP SHIPPING

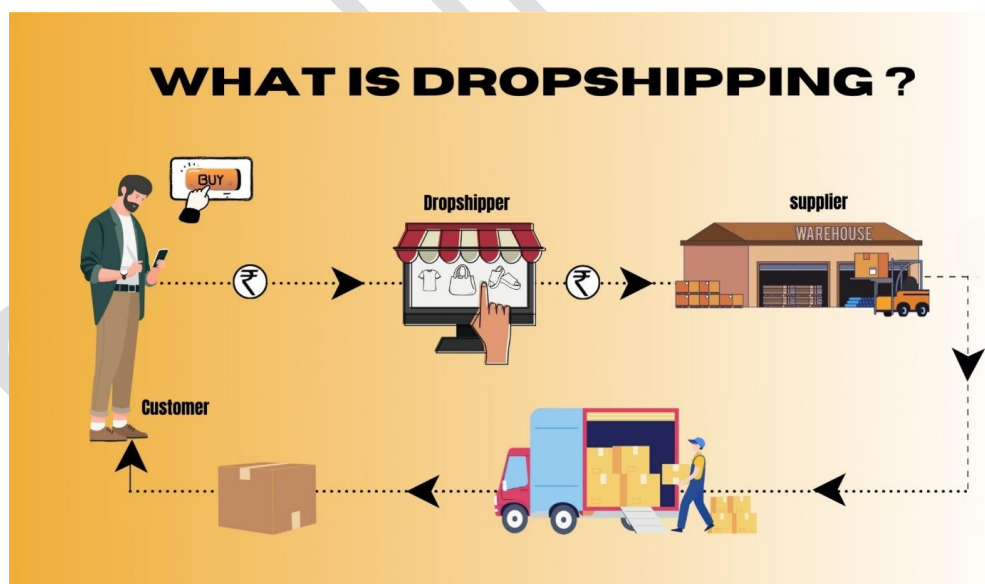
Context : The growing use of **AI-powered online storefronts** and the rapid spread of **short-form social media videos** have significantly accelerated the global expansion of **dropshipping**.

### About Dropshipping

#### What is Dropshipping?

**Dropshipping** is an e-commerce fulfilment model in which a seller markets and sells products **without maintaining physical inventory**. Once a customer places an order, the seller purchases the product from a third-party supplier—such as a manufacturer, wholesaler or fulfilment provider—which then **packs and ships the product directly to the customer**.

Thus, the seller primarily acts as an intermediary between the consumer and the supplier, while inventory storage and physical fulfilment remain with the supplier.



## How Does Dropshipping Work?

### 1. Creation of an Online Store

The seller establishes a digital storefront through an e-commerce website or social-media platform. **Generative AI tools** may be used to create product descriptions, advertisements, images and promotional content.

### 2. Customer Places an Order

A consumer discovers the product through online advertising, social media or influencer content and purchases it from the seller at the advertised retail price.

### 3. Order is Transmitted to the Supplier

The seller forwards the customer's order and delivery details to a third-party supplier and pays the supplier the agreed wholesale price.

### 4. Direct Fulfilment

The supplier packages and dispatches the product **directly to the consumer**, eliminating the need for the seller to physically handle the merchandise.

### 5. Seller Earns the Margin

The seller retains the difference between the **retail price received from the customer and the supplier's wholesale price**, after accounting for expenses such as advertising, platform fees, payment charges and taxes.

## Key Features of Dropshipping

### 1. Low Inventory Requirement

Since sellers do not purchase goods in advance, they avoid:

- Warehouse expenses;
- Inventory holding costs;
- Unsold-stock risks;
- Large upfront capital requirements.

This lowers the entry barrier for small entrepreneurs.

## 2. Asset-Light Business Model

The seller can operate without owning manufacturing, warehousing or delivery infrastructure, making dropshipping an example of an **asset-light digital business model**.

## 3. Global Market Access

Digital platforms allow sellers to reach customers across geographical boundaries, while suppliers may independently manage international shipping, customs and fulfilment.

However, sellers may still have **legal, tax and consumer-protection obligations** in the markets where they operate.

## 4. AI-Enabled Operations

AI tools can increasingly assist with:

- Identifying consumer trends;
- Generating product descriptions and advertisements;
- Customer-service chatbots;
- Demand forecasting;
- Marketing optimisation;
- Sales analytics.

This is contributing to the emergence of **AI-enabled micro-entrepreneurship**.

## 5. Flexible Product Portfolio

Because sellers do not need to stock products beforehand, they can test multiple products and quickly add or remove items according to consumer demand.

## 6. Limited Supply-Chain Visibility

Consumers may have limited information about the **actual manufacturer, product origin, quality standards and supply-chain conditions**.

This can create risks involving counterfeit products, misleading claims and inconsistent quality.

## 7. Customer-Service Challenges

Although the seller is the customer's point of contact, the actual product is controlled and shipped by another entity.

Consequently, problems involving:

- Delayed delivery;
- Damaged goods;
- Returns and refunds;
- Product quality;
- Warranty

can create disputes between the consumer, seller and supplier.

### Applications of Dropshipping

#### **1. Social Media and Influencer Commerce**

Influencers and content creators can promote niche or trending products through platforms such as social media without maintaining their own inventory or logistics infrastructure.

#### **2. Online Retail**

E-commerce businesses can use dropshipping to expand their product catalogue without investing heavily in warehouses and inventory.

#### **3. Trend-Based Commerce**

Entrepreneurs can rapidly introduce products linked to **viral trends, seasonal demand or emerging consumer preferences** and discontinue them when demand falls.

#### **4. Cross-Border E-Commerce**

A seller in one country can market products sourced from suppliers in another country and sell them to consumers across multiple markets.

This makes dropshipping an important component of the broader **digitalisation of international trade**.

#### **5. Dropshipping Education Ecosystem**

The growth of the model has created a secondary market for:

- Online courses;
- E-commerce software;
- Marketing tools;
- Supplier directories;
- Business-consulting services.

However, exaggerated claims regarding quick or guaranteed profits can expose inexperienced entrepreneurs to financial losses.

### Advantages

- Low initial investment.
- Minimal inventory risk.
- Easy entry for small entrepreneurs.
- Ability to test products quickly.
- Access to global consumers.
- Potential for AI-driven automation.
- Flexible and scalable business operations.
- Encourages digital entrepreneurship and self-employment.

### Challenges and Risks

#### **1. Consumer Protection**

Consumers may face difficulties obtaining refunds, replacements or compensation when sellers are unreliable.

#### **2. Quality-Control Problems**

The seller generally does not physically inspect products before dispatch, making quality assurance more difficult.

#### **3. Counterfeit and Misleading Products**

Weak supply-chain transparency can facilitate the sale of counterfeit or substandard goods.

#### **4. Delivery and Logistics Risks**

International sourcing can result in:

- Long delivery times;
- Customs delays;
- Higher shipping costs;
- Difficult return processes.

#### **5. Data and Privacy Concerns**

Digital sellers handle customer information such as names, addresses and payment-related data, creating obligations relating to **data protection and cybersecurity**.

## 6. Tax and Regulatory Compliance

Cross-border dropshipping raises questions concerning:

- GST and other indirect taxes;
- Customs duties;
- Import regulations;
- Consumer-protection laws;
- Product standards;
- E-commerce rules.

## 7. Platform Dependence

Small sellers may become heavily dependent on e-commerce and social-media platforms for advertising, customer acquisition and sales. Changes in algorithms, fees or platform policies can significantly affect their businesses.

### Significance for India

Dropshipping can contribute to India's growing **digital entrepreneurship and e-commerce ecosystem** by allowing individuals and MSMEs to access wider markets with relatively low capital requirements.

It can support:

- Youth entrepreneurship;
- Women-led businesses;
- Rural and small-town digital commerce;
- Export-oriented micro-enterprises;
- Growth of India's digital economy.

However, its sustainable growth requires **consumer protection, transparent supply chains, taxation compliance, data security and effective regulation of cross-border e-commerce.**

## THE ORDER OF THE WHITE DOUBLE CROSS, 1ST CLASS

**Context :** The Prime Minister of India was awarded the **Order of the White Double Cross, First Class**, the **highest state honour of the Slovak Republic**, in recognition of his contribution to strengthening bilateral relations.

## About the Order of the White Double Cross, First Class

The **Order of the White Double Cross** (*Rad Bieleho dvojkríža*) is a distinguished state honour of the **Slovak Republic**, awarded primarily to foreign nationals for exceptional contributions to Slovakia's international relations or for enhancing the country's global standing.



### History

- The Order was established on **1 March 1994**, following the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993, known as the **Velvet Divorce**.
- It forms part of Slovakia's sovereign system of national honours.

### Key Features

- **Three Classes:** The Order is divided into **First, Second and Third Classes**, with the **First Class** being the highest rank.
- **Civil and Military Categories:** It has separate civil and military variants to recognise distinguished contributions in different fields.
- **Awarding Authority:** The honour is conferred by the **President of the Slovak Republic**.
- **Symbolism:** Its insignia prominently features the **white double cross**, an important symbol of Slovakia and a central element of its national coat of arms. The emblem is set against a red background and accompanied by decorative golden elements.

### Significance of the Honour to India's Prime Minister

The conferment of the **Order of the White Double Cross, First Class** on the Prime Minister of India represents Slovakia's recognition of his contribution to strengthening **India–Slovakia bilateral relations** and promoting closer cooperation between the two countries.

It also reflects the growing importance of India's engagement with **Central Europe** across areas such as trade, investment, technology, manufacturing, defence and people-to-people relations.

### **Other Recent International Honours Conferred on India's Prime Minister**

| Country                | Honour                                       |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Slovak Republic</b> | Order of the White Double Cross, First Class |
| <b>Dominica</b>        | Dominica Award of Honour                     |
| <b>Guyana</b>          | Order of Excellence                          |
| <b>Barbados</b>        | Honorary Freedom of Barbados                 |

### **THE 'DANCING GIRL' OF MOHENJO-DARO**

Context : NCERT has decided to **replace the digitally altered image of the famous Mohenjo-daro "Dancing Girl"** in the revised **Class 9 Art textbook**, following concerns over the authenticity of the depiction.

### **About the 'Dancing Girl' of Mohenjo-daro**

#### **What is it?**

- The **Dancing Girl** is a famous bronze statuette from the **Indus Valley/Harappan Civilisation**, representing one of the earliest known examples of sophisticated human figure-making in the region.
- The approximately **10.5-cm-tall** figurine depicts a young woman in a relaxed, confident posture.
- It is regarded as one of the most iconic artefacts associated with the **Mature Harappan phase**.



## Discovery and Historical Context

- **Discovery:** The statuette was found in **1926** during excavations at **Mohenjo-daro**, in present-day Sindh, Pakistan.
- **Archaeological association:** Its discovery was made during excavations led by archaeologist **John Marshall**.
- **Origin of the name:** The term "*Dancing Girl*" was popularised because the figure's posture was interpreted as resembling that of a dancer.
- **Period:** It is generally dated to around **2500 BCE**, during the Bronze Age and the Mature Harappan period.
- **Present location:** The original is preserved in the **National Museum, New Delhi**.

## Distinctive Physical Features

### 1. Dynamic Posture

- The figure stands with her legs apart and her body weight shifted predominantly onto one leg.
- This creates a **natural and dynamic stance**, rather than the rigid posture often associated with ancient sculpture.

### 2. Position of the Arms

- One arm is bent and placed against the hip, while the other hangs downward.
- The unusual positioning contributes to the figure's sense of movement and self-confidence.

### 3. Elaborate Jewellery

- The statuette is notable for its **asymmetrical ornamentation**.
- One arm is heavily adorned with numerous bangles, while the other carries considerably fewer ornaments.
- A simple necklace is also visible.

### 4. Hair and Facial Features

- The figure's hair appears to be arranged in a **coiled bun at the back of the head**.
- Her facial features are stylised rather than anatomically realistic, with prominent eyes, nose, lips and forehead.
- The upward tilt of the head gives the figure a distinctive **confident and assertive expression**.

## Artistic and Technological Significance

### 1. Evidence of Advanced Metallurgy

The statuette demonstrates the Harappans' considerable expertise in **copper and bronze metallurgy**.

### 2. Lost-Wax Casting

- The sculpture is believed to have been produced using the **lost-wax (cire-perdue) casting technique**.
- The process indicates a high degree of technical skill in mould-making, metal casting and finishing.

### 3. Sophisticated Artistic Expression

The sculpture demonstrates that Harappan art was capable of representing:

- Human movement;
- Individual expression;
- Body posture;
- Ornamentation;
- Stylised human anatomy.

### 4. Evidence of Craft Specialisation

The technical complexity of the figurine suggests the existence of **specialised artisans and organised craft production** within Harappan urban centres.

## What Does the Dancing Girl Represent?

The exact identity and social significance of the figure remain **uncertain**.

Although traditionally identified as a dancer, scholars have proposed different interpretations, including:

- A dancer or performer;
- A young woman;
- A representation associated with a particular social group;
- A figure whose precise religious or cultural significance is unknown.

Therefore, **“Dancing Girl” is an interpretive label rather than a proven identification.**

## Prelims Facts

| Feature            | Key Fact                           |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Civilisation       | Indus Valley/Harappan Civilisation |
| Site               | Mohenjo-daro                       |
| Present location   | Sindh, Pakistan                    |
| Material           | Bronze                             |
| Technique          | Lost-wax casting                   |
| Period             | Mature Harappan/Bronze Age         |
| Approx. date       | c. 2500 BCE                        |
| Discovery          | 1926                               |
| Present repository | National Museum, New Delhi         |

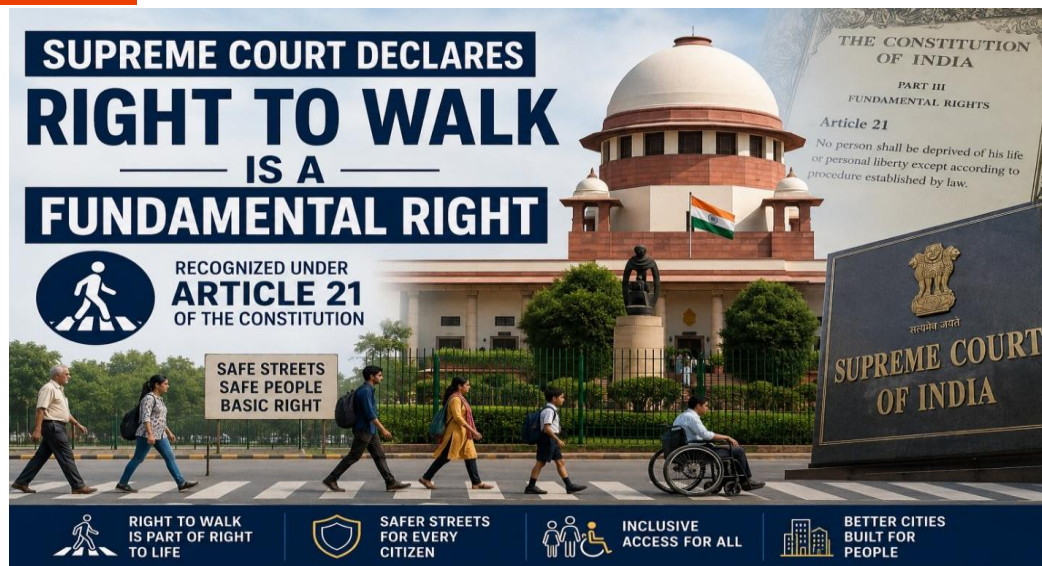
## RIGHT TO WALK IS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

Context : The **Supreme Court of India**, in a landmark ruling, held that the **right to use designated footpaths for walking is protected as a fundamental right under Part III of the Constitution**.

### About the Right to Walk as a Fundamental Right

#### What does the Judgment Establish?

The Supreme Court has recognised the **right of pedestrians to safely use properly demarcated and maintained footpaths** as a constitutional entitlement. The ruling places a corresponding responsibility on public authorities to provide and protect adequate pedestrian infrastructure wherever roads are developed for public use.



## Constitutional Basis

The Court derived the right to walk by reading several fundamental rights together:

- **Article 19(1)(d):** Provides the primary constitutional basis by guaranteeing citizens the **freedom to move freely throughout the territory of India**.
- **Articles 19(1)(a), 19(1)(b) and 19(1)(c):** Rights relating to **freedom of speech and expression, peaceful assembly and association** also depend upon the availability of accessible and safe public spaces.
- **Article 21:** The right to life and personal liberty encompasses conditions necessary for **safe, dignified and meaningful participation in public life**, including pedestrian safety.

## Key Aspects of the Judgment

### 1. Pedestrian Rights and Road Use

- The judgment places significant emphasis on the **priority of pedestrian access to designated footpaths**.
- Motorised transport cannot be allowed to routinely occupy or obstruct spaces specifically intended for pedestrians.

### 2. Responsibility of Public Authorities

The Court identified local and urban authorities as key duty-bearers for ensuring adequate pedestrian infrastructure, including:

- Municipal corporations;
- Municipalities;
- Urban development authorities;

- Panchayats.

These authorities are expected to **plan, construct, maintain and protect pedestrian pathways**.

### 3. Access to Constitutional Remedies

- Citizens can seek appropriate **legal and constitutional remedies** when their right to safe pedestrian movement is obstructed.
- The judgment highlights that pedestrian-related claims may involve constitutional protections beyond remedies available under ordinary motor-vehicle legislation.

### 4. Need for Dedicated Pedestrian Legislation

- The Court highlighted the absence of a **comprehensive, standalone statutory framework for pedestrian rights and safety**.
- It emphasised the need for clearer legal standards governing the planning, construction and maintenance of pedestrian infrastructure.

### 5. Proposal for a Dedicated Regulatory Mechanism

- The judgment supports the idea of creating a **specialised institutional mechanism or independent regulator** for pedestrian infrastructure and safety.
- Such an institution could establish standards, monitor compliance and coordinate implementation among different government agencies.

### Wider Significance

The ruling shifts the understanding of urban mobility from a **vehicle-centric approach towards a people-centric model**.

It has implications for:

- **Right to life and dignity**
- Safe and inclusive urban mobility
- Universal accessibility
- Sustainable transport
- Road safety
- Urban planning
- Public health
- Rights of children, elderly persons and persons with disabilities
- Reduction of dependence on motorised transport

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